

## **Senate Community Relations Committee meeting**

**12:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

**207 Hillman Library**

**March 20, 2014**

**Attendees:** Marissa Arlet, RCCO; Lachelle Binion, OTMA; Laurie Cohen, ULS, CRC Co-Chair; Marnie Hampton, ULS; Linda Hartman, HSL; Holly Hickling, Honors College; Misti McKeehan, PittServes; Kanna Sahni; Community Relations; Tara Sherry-Torres, OPDC; Pamela Toto, SHRS; John Wilds, Community Relations; Wanda Wilson, OPDC

The minutes from February 18th were approved with minor corrections.

**Remarks from the Co-Chair:** Misti McKeehan, the new director of PittServes, was introduced to everyone. She will be invited to all of our future meetings. We also have a new CGS representative, Diamond Grant, who has been unable to attend our meetings so far. The mission statement of the CRC was circulated to refresh everyone's memories.

**Partner Reports:** Wanda Wilson from **OPDC** gave a presentation, outlining the programs and services they provide to the Oakland community. She began by passing around copies of their annual report. OPDC's major focus is on the following platforms: Connect and Engage; Plan and Partner; Live and Invest; Believe and Achieve; and Work and Earn. There are five distinct neighborhoods comprising Oakland. Since it began, three hundred housing units have been developed, mainly for seniors, low-income residents, and special needs residents.

The School to Career program seeks to help low-income high school students identify a career and prepare for college. One hundred percent of the students in this program graduate from high school and are accepted into college. The wraparound services include a college fair, review and help with college application essays, and certification in the Microsoft Office suite.

JobLinks is part of the Work and Earn platform. They assist jobseekers with the necessary skills to find jobs and be successful in their careers. Plans are being made to create a Financial Opportunity Center at JobLinks, which would offer income support services, financial coaching, and other efforts to improve job retention.

KICO stands for Keep it Clean Oakland, whose efforts are carried out by thirty-nine different student groups. They participate in Adopt-a-Block clean ups, Love Your Block projects, façade improvements funded by grants, electronics collections, and the dumpster programs at the end of the school year. There is also the Good Neighbor program to encourage students living off campus to be civil to their fellow Oakland residents, and they work with PittServes and the Noble Hour website.

COR stands for the Coalition of Oakland Residents, and they are involved in outreach efforts towards improving life in Oakland. COR works with other Oakland groups, such as SONG, BACA, OHC, COCO, West Oakland, the Green Team, and Oakwatch, to offer outreach efforts and technical assistance. The Green Team is focused on ecological and landscape projects, as outlined in the Oakland 2025 Master Plan. They have created the Semple Street mural, worked on the Louisa Street bike project, the Bates Street hillside, where they removed invasive plants and planted forty-two native trees, and advocated for bike and pedestrian safety in conjunction with Bike Pittsburgh, among other projects.

OakWatch is a code enforcement group. They hold property owners accountable for the conditions of their homes, and deal with problem properties and landlords, working with the Pitt Police Department, the Health Department, local magistrates, and City Council. Last year, they received a grant from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board and they worked with the Responsible Hospitality Institute.

The Plan and Partner aspect of OPDC's work is represented by partnerships with PCRG GoBurgh, planning for BRT (Bus Rapid Transit), transportation planning, the East Busway expansion plan, the North Oakland Business District, and implementation of the design and development review process for new construction.

As part of its Live and Invest program, OPDC "encourages reinvestment and stabilization of the community through real estate development, increased home ownership, and meeting the needs of the community." Examples of these efforts are the current Employee-Assisted Housing program which began this past year. This would encourage those who work in Oakland to move there, by providing financial incentives and high quality housing, and reducing commutes to work. There is a revolving fund for acquisitions through the Rehab for Resale program, and the Oakland Development Fund. Homes are being rehabbed in West and South Oakland, and there are newly-built homes in Frazier West for sale.

Following her presentation, Linda Hartman asked Wanda about housing for students with disabilities.

Lachelle Binion of **OTMA** spoke next. Lachelle is the Program Administrator at OTMA (Oakland Transportation Management Association). Some of OTMA's projects involve pedestrian safety, alternative commuting, vanpooling, and the Walk Pittsburgh project. A project called Oakland Smart Commutes is a collaboration with the Oakland Business Improvement District. Together they have created maps of Oakland, working with both the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University. The maps will be handed out at Pitt's Arrival Survival event at the end of the summer. OTMA is currently seeking two interns.

**University Update:** Dr. Wilds welcomed Misti McKeenan, and explained that PittServes is supported by Pitt funding to work with students, staff, and faculty at the University. The plan is working on how to support the efforts already taking place in Oakland. A launch party for the new endeavor was held on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Pitt Day in Harrisburg was very successful. There were two hundred and thirty people from the University, and the chancellor was honored by both houses of the legislature.

**Construction Update:** Design work on replacing the Cathedral elevators is taking place. This will be a three-year project, beginning this summer. New elevator cars will be included in the renovation. The construction of dental medical labs in Salk Hall will be completed by the fall of 2014. The complete renovation of Clapp Hall's interior will begin this fall. New bollards and signage will be added to the sidewalks on Fifth Avenue.

**Community Service Updates:** Kannu reported that the first Saturday Good Neighbor Day would take place on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. There are thirteen projects, including rehabbing a house with Rebuilding Together, preparing garden beds, and relocating the Oakland Food Pantry to a larger space.

The annual food drive began on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The food collected supports the Oakland Food Pantry and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Online donations are welcome, and there will be donation boxes all over campus. The chancellor even matches the donations.

Planning for PittStart begins in May. Last year, Kannu and John spoke with thirty-eight hundred new students and their families. One of the issues covered during these talks is responsible partying, which is covered in the new version of the Student Guide.

As an example of promoting service learning across campus, Kannu has been meeting with people from the I-School on providing wayfinding services for people with disabilities. They are mapping Oakland so that it will be navigable for differently-abled pedestrians. Carnegie Mellon is also involved in the project, and they will have smart kiosks available with this information. This is a good example of matching the University's intellectual strengths in technology with the needs of the community.

April 15<sup>th</sup> is our field trip to Uptown Partners. We will meet with Siena Kane and Jeanne McNutt to learn about the services their organization provides, and Mary Ellen Solomon from Duquesne University's Governmental Affairs office. The trip includes a tour of the area, along with a lunch and opportunity to exchange ideas and ask questions.

Holly reported that there will be an opportunity for undergraduates to apply for Community-Based Research Fellowship projects for the fall term. Grants of eight hundred dollars will be provided to the fellows who conduct community-based research and work with a faculty mentor. Also, Pitt Project Oakland will be held on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Three hundred and fifty students have volunteered to clean up the community.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Cohen, April 10, 2014  
Next meeting, Uptown Partners field trip, April 15, 2014

